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ART. X. — CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — *A Manual of Ancient History, containing the Political Geography, Geographical Position, and Social State of the Principal Nations of Antiquity; carefully revised from the Ancient Writers.* By W. C. TAYLOR, LL.D., M. R. A. S. Revised by C. S. HENRY, D. D., Professor of Philosophy and History in the University of the City of New York. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 8vo. pp. 323.

THIS work, at least in its present form, is not adapted to the use of scholars. It is not, like Heeren's valuable manual, to which it is largely indebted, a companion for the historical inquirer, furnishing him with the heads and main events of each epoch, and a catalogue *raisonné* of ancient and modern authors. Its aim is a more humble, though not less important one; to fill a place in the course of elementary study in our schools and colleges. As such it is welcome; for in no department of instruction is the dearth of good class-books more apparent.

History, with its handmaid geography, is a study especially suited to the tastes and capacity of the youthful mind. By its minuteness of detail, its occasional glances at individual character, its variety of incident, and its unceasing appeal to the imagination, it interests and excites the young student. If history is to be taught at all to minds not yet mature, it should be with an eye to such effects. Mere catalogues of dates and places, mere rolls of dynasties, are of as little use as the figures of a superannuated almanac. Though, fortunately, these are seldom remembered, they cost the poor learner vexation enough to disgust him with the whole study. We apprehend that one great object of instruction is to interest the pupil in his studies. To give the beginner a distaste for his work is to do him an irreparable injury; for not only is his immediate advancement precluded, but he forms a rooted prejudice, which even the ripper judgment of later years may be unable to remove. We cannot see the wit or wisdom of systematically reducing a subject to its driest elements; of killing out every green branch, and serving up the stubble. This, however, is too often done, especially in historical and geographical manuals. The pupil is forced to plod his weary way through a desert of names and dates, to him as little attractive or important as a militia muster-roll.

The work before us is accompanied, in the American edition, by a "Manual of Modern History," of which at present we have

nothing to say. Our remarks are confined to the ancient history. Though purporting to be carefully revised from the ancient writers, it seems to us to bear much oftener the mark of the modern compilers and essayists, to whom the author in his preface candidly acknowledges his obligations. We may herein do him some injustice; for the notes to which he refers, "consisting for the most part of illustrations and anecdotes," if relating to this portion of his work, have disappeared. Whether this is one of the "slight curtailments" made by the American editor, we are not informed. For the purposes of instruction, they would be of little value. Notes and illustrations, to be of any use, should be wrought into the body of the work. The pupil always regards the note as subordinate to the text, and is apt entirely to neglect it. We are not quite satisfied with the execution of the work, though in some respects its plan is excellent. A systematic attempt has been made to present a sketch of the physical, social, and political condition of the various races and nations who pass successively in review. To the geographical and topographical outlines of different countries and cities much space has been devoted. All this is well. But the work is done too often in a dry, dogged way, with a consistent disdain of illustration, anecdote, or fancy. The Athenian character, for instance, so capable of being set off by a few spirited strokes and pertinent illustrations, is dismissed almost without a touch of life. Of the wayward and sensitive, though keen-eyed and energetic Demos, scarcely a feature is seen. No attempt, or only a most meagre one, is made to show the causes of the greatness of Athens or Rome. We have no hint of the peculiar traits in the Roman character, which fitted it alike to acquire and retain the sway of the world; none of those amazing contrasts between national heroism and individual meanness, so conspicuous in the history of ancient times. The student cannot sympathize with the great men of Greece or Rome, because no effort is made to raise them from the dead before him. Cæsar might have been Pompey, or Pompey, Cæsar, but for dates and places. The men are known, not by their true character, but by their latitude or their century.

The geographical portion of the book, with some barren exceptions, is well enough prepared; though we think that physical geography might have received a larger share of attention. The topographical descriptions of Athens and Rome are a valuable addition to the general geography. The proportions of the book are not well adjusted. The history of the Jews is drawn out to an exorbitant length, — especially as every page reminds one of the superior life and truth of the Scripture narrative.

While the career of Alexander the Great is disposed of in four pages, the history of the states which arose out of the dismemberment of his empire occupies thirty-seven, though these states owe nearly all their significance to their collision at a subsequent period with the colossal power of Rome, and are best treated of as episodes to the great movement of Roman conquest. We have here and there chapters containing only dull skeletons of dull histories of kings whose names suggest nothing, and whose deeds are hardly worthy of the scanty notice they receive.

The accuracy of a class-book should be complete. The learner should have, at least, the satisfaction of having learned a fact, though it be a very arid one. The work under review is in this respect by no means out of the reach of criticism. Though in such a treatise we deem no blunder a light one, we can pass over such slips as *western* frontier for eastern, *southeast* for northwest, *Mount* Opus for the *city* Opus, and the like. We may wonder what "ancient writer" informed Mr. Taylor that Marathon was *forty* miles distant from Athens, or that Saguntum was *on the Iberus*, or that Agrigentum was *eighteen hundred furlongs* from the sea, or that the younger Scipio was the adopted son of the elder. We need some new theory of ubiquity to account for the same battle taking place at two dates, nine years apart, or for the possibility that Cæsar should have been in Spain at the moment of his assassination in the Senate-house at Rome. We have been used to hear of the Olympic games as occurring every four years. Mr. Taylor substitutes *five*. We wish his new Olympiads might explain some anomalies in his chronology. Hieroglyphics, it appears, are of too little prominence in the history of Egyptian civilization to be even alluded to; and Babylon, having been only the intended seat of Alexander's empire and the place of his death, is not named in the account of his life. Mr. Taylor will permit us to inquire, who were the "*twelve* sons of Jacob" that sold "their brother Joseph" into Egypt.

One word as to the American edition, "revised by C. S. Henry, D. D., Professor of Philosophy and History in the University of the City of New York." Dr. Henry informs us, that, in revising this Manual, he "has made a few slight curtailments, principally in the first part of the volume." Perhaps the absence of any notice of Egyptian hieroglyphics is owing to one of these "slight" curtailments. Be that as it may, we must protest against the practice of indorsing, with names of some notoriety, books in the execution of which the pretended revisers have so small a share. The reviser of a book has no right to give currency to outrageous typographical blunders, which the most cursory examination of the proof-sheets would have detect-

ed. The reading of the sheets of this book seems to have been intrusted to some ignoramus, who had never read a line of Greek or Latin; so that, in respect to the orthography and accentuation of proper names, the present edition is wholly untrustworthy. We have Virentes for Veientes, Conrum for Comum, Careto for Caieta, Ancius for Anicius, Ancus for Aruns, Africa for Attica, Erus for Ems, Aquæ Lutiæ for Aquæ Sextiæ, &c. To show the degree of care with which the accents have been affixed, out of a forest of errors we select the following; Méssene, Megáris, Ozólæ, Ephýre, Taygétum, Phálereus, Mycále, Thrasýbulus, Evergétés, Creméra, Archímedes, and Cicéro, — the last, as if needing confirmation, appearing thrice on one page. We ought in justice, however, to acknowledge the scrupulous accuracy with which such words as Núma, Tárquin, Álba, Cróton, Gáza, and others, are accentuated; though we know not why Dendera and Naucratis have not at least an equal right. We cannot complain of a man merely for holding his literary reputation so cheap as to consent to be responsible for a roll of blunders, which would disgrace a school-boy. That is his own affair. But we do complain of publishers who borrow, and editors who lend, the authority of respectable names to editions equally discreditable to both.

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2. — *Rural Economy, in its Relations with Chemistry, Physics, and Meteorology; or Chemistry applied to Agriculture*. By J. B. BOUSSINGAULT, Member of the Institute of France, etc. Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by GEORGE LAW, Agriculturist. New York: Appleton & Co. 1844. 12mo. pp. 507.

THIS is a handsome American reprint of a faulty English translation of an excellent work. M. Boussingault, whose name is by no means new to our readers, possesses rare qualifications as a writer on chemical and physical science applied to agriculture and rural affairs generally. He is a learned and experienced chemist, and has largely contributed to the recent advancement of the organic department of this science; he has been an extensive traveller, and has resided for several years in tropical America; he is also a practical farmer. The fruits of his foreign travel, and of his observations and experiments at home as the fellow-laborer of Arago and Dumas, tested by his experience at Bechelbronn, as a farmer perfectly familiar not only with the principles upon which agriculture depends, but also with their results under a great variety of circumstances,